

River Currents

Second Coast Guard District
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River Currents

Second Coast Guard District

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On the front...

CW04 David Jago, MSO St. Louis, inspects the throwable life ring and other safety equipment during a recent vessel safety inspection aboard the Alton Belle Casino. (photo by PA2 Robin Ressler)

Base St. Louis Aids Injured Motorist During V.P. Fair

by SN Dominic Geniuk and PA3 Rob Raskiewicz

The Coast Guard once again came to the rescue during the Veiled Prophet Fair on Labor Day weekend in St. Louis, but not in the usual manner.

On the morning of Aug. 31, Boatswain's Mate First Class Mark Helmers and Boatswain's Mate Third Class Tim Molly, both from Base St. Louis, and several other Coast Guard volunteers were setting up a Desert Storm display on Memorial Drive near the Arch Grounds. They heard a loud crash on Interstate 70 below.

"I knew instantly what it was, I've heard that sound before—sort of like heavy metal being crunched," Molly said.

"We ran over and looked down on the interstate and saw this car sitting there with the front portion demolished," he said. "I could see the driver moving inside and I knew we needed to help."

Sprinting down an off-ramp, hurdling over the center divider, and racing down I-70, Helmer and Molly were the first people to reach the accident scene. They immediately began checking the occupant, Yen Mach, for injuries.

Gunners Mate Senior Chief Dennis Kirk and Machinery Technician John Kinney, both Operation Desert Storm veterans from the port security unit in Kenosha, Wis., arrived next and directed traffic.

"As bad as the car was, I guess I thought that her injuries would have been more severe," Molly said. "She had cuts and bruises on her shoulder, arms and legs, with one deep cut on her leg."

Helmers and Molly checked the victim's vital signs and made her as comfortable as possible. Molly cleaned and dressed the wound on her leg while Helmers attempted to calm her down.

The ambulance arrived 20 minutes later. Helmers and Molly assisted the ambulance crew while they extracted the victim from the damaged car and loaded her into the ambulance.

According to Mach, she was on her way to her sister's house when she hit a slick spot beneath the underpass. Her airbag-equipped car swerved out of control and smashed head-on into the underpass wall.

Mach was treated at St. Louis University Hospital and released.

Correction:

In the last issue, we mistakenly said the Coast Guard Institute was located in Topeka, Kan. Its correct location is Oklahoma City, Okla.

Gambling Boats Increase Work At MSO St. Louis, MSD Davenport

Story and photo
by PA2 Robin Ressler



With the addition of gambling boats, the inspection workload has tripled for MSO St. Louis.

Riverboat gambling is back in the Midwest, after more than a 100 year absence. Gaming enterprises are racing to get their floating franchises underway along the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers.

These paddleboat replicas have resurrected the past to breathe new life into depressed rivertown economies.

As these ventures strive to get their boats approved for operation, they have substantially increased the workload of the Coast Guard in the area.

It's up to the Coast Guard to make sure that, while underway, passenger safety is not a game of chance.

A year ago, Coast Guard Marine Safety Detachment Davenport, Iowa had no gaming boats in their area of responsibility. Now they have six, with more on the way.

"Every day we deal with a gambling boat or two for one reason or another," said LCDR Mike L. Schafersman, Supervisor of MSD Davenport. "We have fire protection issues to settle on these vessels, technical issues to correct and marine casualty cases to investigate."

"Our man hours for inspections have tripled so far this year," he said.

People who make their living on the gambling boats are usually happy to see the Coast Guard visit.

"Complying with the Coast Guard puts us in a good light," said John Reichert, the "Alton Belle Casino's" director of Advertising and Marketing. "Our goal is to provide entertainment and hospitality. And the Coast Guard helps us do it safely."

"Basically, we are protecting lives and property by keeping the vessels within the safety standards," said CWO David A. Jago, a marine safety inspector from Marine Safety Office St. Louis.

Jago recently inspected the 149-foot "Alton Belle Casino" to make certain that only the passengers' money is at risk when they're gambling on the river. The gambling boat wheels and deals on the Mississippi from a landing at Alton, Ill., a river town north of St. Louis.

Alton, which has suffered from a declining population base and high unemployment, may benefit from the increased tourist traffic. Other port cities like Peoria, Ill. and Dubuque, Iowa are also banking on additional income from tourists lured by this old fashioned entertainment.

Besides all the gambling equipment, the "Alton Belle Casino" also carries more than 500 passengers and a crew of 60, and that interests the Coast Guard.

"Our concern with this type of vessel is egress ability. We must

be sure the passengers and crew can get out if there is an emergency" said Jago.

"We inspect all the safety equipment and required lifesaving gear to make certain it is in good working order and easily accessible, when the chips are down," he said.

The riverboat crews drill for emergencies and practice with lifesaving gear under the watchful eye of Coast Guard inspectors every three months.

So far, seven gambling boats operate in the Second District. Floating casinos competing with the "Alton Belle" are the "Diamond Lady," homeported in Bettendorf, Iowa, the "Emerald Lady," which operates between Keokuk, Madison, and Burlington, Iowa, the "Para-Dice," just opened rolls on the river from Peoria, Ill.

The two largest casinos, both currently licensed for up to 2000 passengers, are the "President," at Davenport, Iowa and the "Dubuque Casino Belle," which draws people to Dubuque, Iowa.

Louisiana, Iowa, Illinois and Mississippi legislatures have authorized casino riverboat gambling. Missouri and Minnesota are considering similar legislation.

So in the Second District, "Guardians of marine safety on the Western Rivers" can probably bet on a gold rush of passenger vessel safety work in the future.

D2's CEA Expresses Views On

by PA3 W. Scott Epperson

Master Chief Petty Officer, Ronald E. Reed, the Command Enlisted Advisor of the Second Coast Guard District, takes his responsibilities and his career in the Coast Guard seriously.

For the past 35 years, Reed has carried a variety of responsibilities and jobs.

He has seen duty on a buoy tender, at an air station, in training commands and at the Coast Guard Institute. He was a recruiter and has worked in Coast Guard Special Assignments.

Reed was first assigned as a CEA in 1980 at the Coast Guard Training Center in Yorktown. He went on to become the CEA of the First District and in July of this year has taken on the duties of the Command Enlisted Advisor of the Second District.

The following interview took place on November 1.

Q. Why did you become a CEA?

A. I looked at the criteria for CEA and saw that many of the things I did as a yeoman followed that. So I already had an understanding of pay, travel, medical, whatever it was, and how they worked.

"It was then the idea of being able to accept that challenge, to go out and provide our people with that information and to try to make sure our enlisted people keep informed."

Q. What does your job as a CEA entail?

A. "I look at things when I go out and talk to our people on these areas: your rights, your benefits, your welfare and your morale."

"Now, all those areas fit into two categories. Law, public law, which we in the Coast Guard can't just go out and arbitrarily change. Public law has to be changed in congress."

"We have those rights and benefits and we have Coast Guard policy; with a stroke of

the pen the Commandant can make changes. He can change it or he can do away with it.

"It's important that we (CEA's) convey that information to our enlisted people."

"We can tell our enlisted people 'OK this is what you have to do.'"

"As a member of the Coast Guard, or as a U.S. Citizen, if we aren't satisfied with the Coast Guard's policy, we (the enlisted people) have an avenue we can use to help make changes."

"Bring it to the attention of your CEA. Your CEA can take that information and pass it to the Master Chief Petty Officer Of The Coast Guard. The Master Chief Petty Officer Of The Coast Guard has the ear of the Commandant. I can take those same things, if it has to deal with the Second District. I have the ear of the District Commander."

"If you have a policy you don't think is right, you, writing as a Coast Guard member, will carry a lot of weight. If you tell me I can pass that information on, but if you will take the time to sit down and write a letter to the Master Chief Petty Officer, or to the Commandant voicing your concerns, it will be a better way of doing business. After you've gone through your chain of command and nothing has happened, you have the right to write them and we should be doing that."

"The same thing goes in the area of writing our congressmen, it's in Coast Guard regulations, how to go about doing that."

"I think every enlisted member should write their congressman on a regular basis."

"Congress makes policy, makes rules, makes them laws, and it effects us."

"These are laws that only Congress can change. It's not going to change just by saying 'it's not working and I'm going to talk to the Command Enlisted Advisor, or talk to the Master Chief Petty Officer of The Coast Guard.' We start writing our congressmen finding out how did

they vote on the issues that affect us."

"If we're putting them in office we should be able to say 'are they supporting us or not?' If not, we should elect someone who will support us."

"If you look at the things that have happened, a lot of programs were lost. WHY? Why have we lost those? We lost because those representatives we put in office aren't supporting us. They're not voting for issues that affect us, they're voting against them."

"We say our benefits are being eroded, then why don't we do something about it."

"It takes every one of us as U.S. Citizens to start getting involved in the political arena of our country."

"If we want to change things, we can change it in the military. We have over six-million votes in the military. I'm talking about active duty, reserves, our spouses and our dependents 18 years of age and over."

"We also have a civilian force working side-by-side with us who knows a lot about our policies and procedures. They can see these things are happening, and we may be able to get their support as well."

Q. How does D2 compare to other districts?

A. "I think, for the enlisted people, it is unique because they basically run our Second Coast Guard District units."

"Our vessels have E-9's in command. They go out there and they run the rivers. No other district has that type of set up. They do their job with excellence."

"We should be very proud that the Commandant has passed command down to our enlisted master chiefs and given them the authority to be in charge of these vessels, keeping our navigational waters open."

"There's a great challenge here for all of us who are involved in the operational or support aspect of our missions."

Critical, Timely Issues

Q. What are the most troubling problems you would like to see corrected in the Second District and in the Coast Guard.

A. "In the short time I've been in the Second District I've looked at Coast Guard housing, government owned or government leased. Also, medical treatment for our dependents and the availability of medical treatment through the CHAMPUS program. There needs to be change in the Second Coast Guard District in how it's run.

"I just went out to our LORAN station in Boise City, OK. Our people have to go hundreds of miles to get treatment at a Military Treatment Facility. We have people in remote areas. There are only a couple of doctors in some of these areas and they don't want to take CHAMPUS, so what are our people supposed to do?"

"I believe we can change how CHAMPUS is run for our Coast Guard people in remote areas. They should be able to go to any doctor and get treatment. We should be able to take care of our people and their dependents.

"For our housing, we have a Quality Action Team right now, within the District looking into operations, policies and procedures of our Second Coast Guard District housing. I believe

this group is going to give some very good recommendations on how to change our housing operations."

Q. What problems do you see in housing right now?

A. "We don't have the staff to adequately perform a good housing program.

"You can have money, go in and ask for waivers to get more money for housing, but we need to have the people to do the program.

Q. Is there anything else you would like to say?

A. Two other areas are also needed in our district. A Chaplain is needed to meet the spiritual needs of our people. We are the only district that does not have a permanent chaplain assigned.

The other area is a Health Benefits Advisor. This individual is needed to administer the administration aspect of our medical program, both for active duty and their families in our 22 state area.

"I spoke earlier about getting involved. 1992, election year, is probably one of the biggest things that is facing our country."

"Every one of us should vote. There's no greater right than to vote for our representation.

"We sometimes neglect that freedom. We sell it short. Many countries, many people in other countries would give anything to be able to vote for who they want to represent them.

"I challenge every person in the Coast Guard to get out and vote. I challenge them to find out who they're voting for, what the record of that individual is and find out if they're supporting us in the military or if they're not.

"We have many representatives in our congress that support us, your representative might be one of them. I highly encourage you to write them, thank them for the job they're doing, and thank them for the support they're giving us.

"In the 100th Congress there was 13% that had served in the military.

Over 87% have no idea what military life is like. And yet they're making policies and procedures for us.

"It's hard to say they know what is happening in our lives if they've never served.

"We need to let them know what's going on, we need to write our representatives showing them these things and how they effect us and we need their support. If they don't provide it, we should look for someone else to provide it."

"VOTE VOTE VOTE"

YN3 Brian McClure Selected As "Sailor of the Quarter"

by PA3 Rob Raskiewicz

Editor's Note: If your unit has a Coast Guardsman or sailor of the quarter program and you would like to recognize an outstanding winner, send photographs and a story to River Currents.

Yeoman Third Class Brian McClure was recently selected as the Second District Staff Person of the Quarter.

McClure was cited for his unwavering devotion to duty, superb military appearance and inspiring spirit of volunteerism, according to a letter signed by

Rear Admiral Norman T. Saunders, Second District Commander.

Noted was McClure's exemplary performance while assigned to the Second District's Marine Safety Division and color guard. He recently completed a demanding course of instruction at the Air Force's Non-Commissioned Officer Leadership School in Little Rock, Ark., where he graduated with distinguished honors.

"Brian exercised initiative in nearly everything he did," LCDR Steven Mojonier, one of McClure's supervisors in the Marine Safety division, said. "When he finished a project he went on to the next, and if there wasn't a 'next,' he found things that needed to be done."

"His 'go-get-em' attitude would

have to be one of his biggest assets—no one pushes him more than himself, and I admire that."

"When he first came to our office, he had a very positive attitude," CDR Jonathan Glantz, (m) division's Chief of Planning and Budget Branch, said.

"His positive attitude, adaptable nature and his willingness to help all had a stabilizing affect on the office during trying times," he said.

Petty Officer McClure's commitment didn't end at the office. As a regular participant in the Second District's Partnership in Education program, McClure gave his time to help inner-city children.

YN3 McClure plans on making the Coast Guard a career, either through the enlisted ranks or the officer corps.

RVF Job Not Done Yet

Explaining the Recreational Vessel Fee law to the boating public has been a major Coast Guard project during the last six months of 1991.

The Second District Public Affairs staff has fielded more than 12,000 phone calls on its toll-free RVF hotline (1-800-451-9148). The September phone bill alone was \$2,100.

Statistics, however, may be deceiving. In some respects the work has just begun.

Despite the huge effort made to educate boaters, including pamphlets, television talk shows and newspaper and magazine articles, there still seems to be confusion in the boating community about the program and ample evidence that not everyone got the word.

According to the March 28, 1991 Federal Register, the Coast Guard estimated that more than 3 million recreational vessels over 16 feet in length would require stickers. As of November 19, slightly more than 500,000 decals have been purchased.

Using those figures, only 15 percent of boaters bought the sticker, but the Second District number may be lower.

Many Second District commanding officers have reported that they have never seen an RVF sticker in their area of operations.

On January 1, 1992 we start over again selling 1992 stickers. Every boater who bought a sticker in 1991 will have to purchase a new one—no matter

when they bought the first one.

Every Coast Guardsman from CO to CPO to SA is an important resource in educating the public. This includes our relatives, friends and neighbors who use the waterways.

Be informed about the RVF law. Know at least the basics and where to refer people who have questions.

To review, recreational boats greater than 16 feet in length, used on navigable waters (waters having access to the ocean) need to display the RVF decal on their boats next to their state numbers. The maximum fine for noncompliance is \$5,000.

The toll-free number to order stickers with a credit card is 1-800-848-2100.

Reserves To The Rescue

Though responding to RVF inquiries was a challenge for the Public Affairs staff, help was available. PS1 Terry Styers of Reserve Unit MSO St. Louis and other reservists were activated from July through October to help out.

A trained explosives and small arms expert, Styers found himself dealing with hundreds of concerned and baffled boaters.

"I really didn't know what to expect," Styers said. "It definitely was out of my job field."

He rapidly adapted by converting his warfare expertise into communications skills.

"I enjoyed talking to all the people, even though some didn't enjoy talking to me when they heard they needed the sticker," he said.

"Also, I feel good that I helped broaden the public's knowledge that the Coast Guard is in their area even though they never see them," Styers said.

Styers and the other reservists assigned handled more than 7,000 of the 12,000 calls placed to the RVF hotline.



PS1 Terry Styers explains the sometimes confusing RVF fee program to the vast boating public of the Second District. (photo by PA3 Rob Raskiewicz)



All In A Day's Work For BM2

BM2 Jan Hipple (right) takes a break from the task at hand to reenlist for three more years at Marine Safety Detachment Cincinnati. He took the oath from LT Ron Hassler, the MSD's supervisor. Hassler commended Hipple for observing appropriate safety procedures while trimming the grounds.

Pollution Experts Monitor Spill

by PA3 Rob Raskiewicz

Coast Guard marine safety experts from St. Louis and Paducah, KY. monitored the clean-up of a large amount of hazardous chemical, when a tank barge struck a submerged object on the Mississippi River near Cape Girardeau, MO., Sept. 5.

The collision tore holes in the lead barge below the waterline, which caused its cargo of naphtha, a light petroleum product, to escape into the river at the rate of 120 gallons every hour. An estimated 5,500 gallons of the product was lost according to CDR Jack Buri, Commanding Officer of the Marine Safety Office in Paducah and the On Scene Coordinator for the spill.

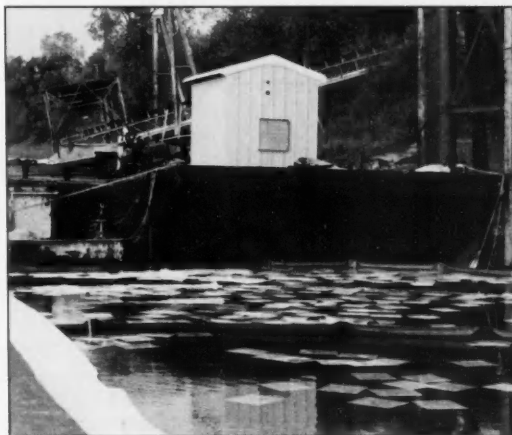
The operator of the towboat Poseidon said he struck an uncharted object while he was passing another barge and tow. After the incident, crewmembers stated they could immediately smell the odor of naphtha and the pilot then ran up on the bank to get the damaged tow out of the main channel and strong currents.

A sorbent boom was deployed around the leaking barge to contain the escaping chemical. The remainder of the cargo was off-loaded or "lightered" to another barge to ensure that no more would escape.

According to the diver hired by the towing company, the damage to the barge was more extensive than originally thought—the whole port side of the bottom plating was torn.

This was the first activation of the District Response Advisory Team, or DRAT. Led by LCDR Jane Hartley of the Second District's Marine Safety Division, DRAT may be activated during any Second District spill emergency to assist local units.

"Naphtha is quite volatile; this spill dissipated quickly," LT Robert Acker, the Second



Absorbent booms and pads contain leaking Naphtha until it can be safely unloaded into another barge. (photo by D2 (m) division)

District's Safety and Health Specialist who assisted the DRAT team field response, said. "The clean-up operations went well."

According to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, no environmentally sensitive areas will suffer based on the amount that was discharged.



Lieutenant Bob Acker tries to locate a mock sunken chlorine barge by listening for a transmitting "pinger" which is attached to all chlorine barges. (photo by PA3 Scott Epperson)

Chlorine Barge Seminar Promotes Safety

Transportation safety experts, marine industry representatives, federal, state and local officials gathered in Paducah, Ky. on 12 and 13 November for a safety seminar sponsored by the Chlorine Institute and Coast Guard Marine Safety Office Paducah.

The purpose of the seminar was to promote awareness of the hazards of transporting chlorine gas on waterways and review emergency procedures should a barge sink or leak.

Though chlorine appears to be a relatively benign chemical used in everyday household applications, its presence in large quantities carries a tremendous potential for disaster. In a worst-case scenario, a typical 900-ton barge load of pressurized chlorine gas, could,

if released, disperse a greenish-yellow cloud capable of snuffing out life as far as 30 miles away.

Fortunately, chlorine tank barges are subject to rigorous inspections by the Coast Guard and the industry's safety record is excellent. There are presently 35 chlorine tank barges on the inland waterways.

Though six chlorine barges have sank since 1960 in the United States, no chlorine has been released since 1974.

Participants observed a demonstration of barge "capping" procedures on a loaded tank barge and had the opportunity to track down hidden acoustical transmitters on the river using hydrophones. All chlorine barges have two transmitters that allow them to be detected on a river bottom under four feet of silt.

RADM Saunders A

by LT Christopher Otto

Rear Adm. Norman T. Saunders assumed command of the Second Coast Guard District September 11, during a formal military ceremony at the Army Aviation Systems Command in St. Louis.

He relieved Rear Adm. William J. Ecker who guided the 22-state western waterway region through a turbulent period of adverse river conditions caused by flooding, ice and drought since March 1989.

Saunders, who was selected for flag rank shortly before his new assignment, spent the last six years in South Florida where he helped plan and carry out U.S. drug interdiction strategy and operations. He said the dramatic changes in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the Middle East may present tremendous economic opportunities to America's heartland as new markets open up.

He expressed his commitment toward helping the river industries prepare for this potential growth and keeping waterborne cargo moving safely and efficiently. Saunders said he looks forward to riding the rivers on both Coast Guard river tenders and commercial tows and developing a close partnership with the shipping industry, Army Corps of Engineers and state and local officials.

The Atlantic Area Commander, Vice Adm. Paul A. Welling, presided over the relief and delivered the keynote address. He said the Coast Guard, both as a military service and a regulatory agency, has responded to rapidly changing world events, such as the Persian Gulf War, and will continue to exert a worldwide influence to ensure safety at sea and the efficiency of maritime commerce.

Welling said threats to domestic security posed by the importation of illegal drugs and pollution of the environment have placed the service in a critical role and allowed it to grow in an era of shrinking budgets. While continuing to operate 49,000 buoys and lighthouses and saving more than 4,000 lives yearly, the Coast Guard executes missions as diverse as protecting vital fishery resources and conducting scientific research in Antarctica.

He said the Coast Guard's adoption of the Total Quality Management model has given the service a greater sense of professionalism and commitment. Communications is the backbone of quality management and is exemplified by the productive relationship between the Second Coast Guard District and the agencies and industries that use the river system, according to Welling.



RADM William J. Ecker was relieved by RADM Norman T. Saunders, during a Sept. 11 ceremony in St. Louis.
(photo by PA2 Robin Ressler)

Assumes Command



Members of the official party stand at attention while the Second District Color Guard posts the colors. (photo by PA2 Robin Ressler)



YMC Ronald Reed, Second District command enlisted advisor, gives RADM Ecker his flag to signify his departure as D2's commander. (photo by PA3 Rob Raskiewicz)



Mrs. Anne Ecker and Mrs. Chris Saunders share the emotion of the event with their husbands. (photo by PA2 Robin Ressler)

Rear ADM Ecker Receives Legion of Merit for Performance as District Commander

by LT Christopher Otto

Vice Adm. Paul A. Welling presented the Legion of Merit to Rear Adm. William J. Ecker for his energetic leadership and cooperative spirit in managing the inland waterways and Coast Guard personnel and resources.

During his remarks, Ecker thanked his staff and the men and women of the Second Coast Guard District for their fine performance during his tour.

The Legion of Merit is one of the nation's highest peacetime medals and is awarded for exceptionally meritorious service.

Rear Adm. Ecker's new assignment is Chief, Office of Navigation Safety and Waterways Services at Coast Guard headquarters in Washington D.C.

An Eventful River Ride

by LT Christopher Otto

As November locks the Midwest in its frigid grasp, geese flee south and leaves tumble from trees.

The flow of commerce along the mighty Mississippi defies the change of seasons. Powerful tugs push huge tows of barges laden with grain, coal steel and chemicals to feed the demands of industry.

Aboard the M/V CARL CANNON the crew prepares to make another Cajun coal run. Soft bituminous coal from the mines of Southern Illinois fuels the hungry generators of Louisiana's largest electrical utility.

Grit and dust from the previous day's loadout shrouds the decks and permeates the passageways and compartments of the 140-foot tug. The 16-cylinder diesels growl in expectation as the supply barge tops off the fuel tanks.

Weary from the all-night evolution of loading coal, shifting strings of barges downriver through the narrow gauntlet of bridges linking downtown St. Louis with Illinois and making up the tow, the rivermen turn to cleanups as the pilot nudges the five-wide mass of 20 barges downriver into the swift current.

From his wheelhouse perch, Captain Jimmy Cain scans the winding highway of water, buoys and bank, anticipating the

delicate maneuvers of rudder and throttle that will mesh the 40,000-ton load with the river's unyielding flow.

Piloting the rivers is a lonely occupation. He functions as lookout, radarman, quartermaster, radioman and captain.

Cain rehearses every move, talking to himself as if seeking approval and reassurance from a phantom mentor. In his case, it could be his father, who was also a riverboat pilot.

After 17 years on the rivers, Cain doesn't think he measures up to the old man. "I wish I was as good as my dad was," he said. "I get by."

Cain is the temporary captain of the CARL CANNON. The tug he normally serves on is in a shipyard. The 30 day on, 20 day off cycle means that there is no regular crew on the boats but a succession of people coming and going.

It would be difficult to detect that Cain is not in familiar surroundings. He appears comfortable in the wheelhouse and working with the crew, an interchangeable cog in the American Commercial Barge Line fleet.

The CARL CANNON has a crew of 10: captain, relief pilot, engineer, cook and six deckhands. Underway duty is an endless cycle of six hours on and six off.

The long watches make it difficult to recuperate. Time off is spent eating, unwinding and resting before the next watch.

The men are fortunate to get three hours of uninterrupted sleep at a time.

Riverboat crews are hardly isolated during transits. The wheelhouse is always within radio range of one of three Coast Guard Groups and has a telephone and facsimile machine.

The boats are also modern. The daily log is kept on a computer and the tug's progress is recorded on a vessel management system that calculates speed over ground and fuel economy.

It does not take long for the crew to fall into their routine after leaving St. Louis, or for a

visitor to realize that there is a monotony associated with it.

"Ninty-nine percent of the time you are bored, but the one percent will scare you to death," Cain said. "At times you say, 'it looks better behind me than it does in front of me.'"

Close calls carve a deep impression on a pilot's memory. Cain recalled one unforgettable transit under the ancient Eads Bridge during flood conditions in downtown St. Louis.

Built in the 19th century, the narrow channel between its spans leaves little room for error.

"I ran the bridge like I normally would, but the current was different because of the high water," he said. "I ended up looking at steel directly in front of me."

"The two mates in the wheelhouse with me laid below," Cain said. "I swung the rudders hard left and ran down to the main deck."

"When I reached the deck, someone yelled that I had missed the bridge," Cain said. "I ran back to the wheelhouse, put the rudder amidship and continued down river."

Both Cain and the CANNON's relief pilot on this trip, Joe Bass, are family men. They say the month-long absences are hard on family life.

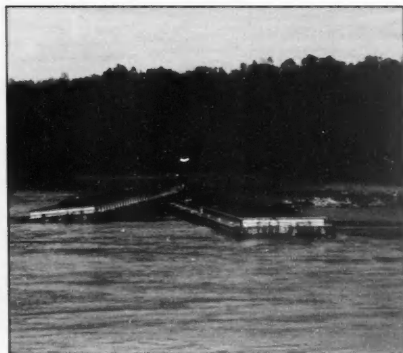
"My kids are grown," Bass, a grey-whiskered Vietnam Veteran, said. "I don't know them and they don't know me."

"After a while, you get the urge to go to sleep in your own bed at night, without the engines rumbling and roaring," he said.

Bass is not exaggerating. The CARL CANNON is a bellowing 6,200 horsepower monster.

At normal cruising speeds, the noise makes it difficult to relax or sleep for those unaccustomed to it. But, the rumble is not steady.

The pilot plays the throttles like a symphony ranging from a relatively quiet idle to full power. When he backs the engines full, which occurs often on downriver trips, the whining and vibration are brain rattling.



Three coal barges from the Carl Cannon grounded after the tow hit a dike on the Upper Mississippi River. (photo by LT Christopher Otto)



Quick recovery. American Commercial Barge Line tugs from Cairo dewater the barges, shift cargo and patch holes to prepare the tow to resume its transit to Louisiana. (photo by LT Christopher Otto)

Backing down, or flanking, is an essential skill in negotiating the winding bends on the river. Moderate turns may be steered with caution, but, in most cases, the momentum of the huge load of coal forces the pilot to use the current to stay in the channel.

Flanking into a bend begins by backing down to current speed on the approach. With a full load, this means backing down full well before the bend and hugging the midchannel buoy line.

Using the full power of the tug it is impossible to stop or reverse the tow once the bend is reached because the current runs swifter there.

The pilot is committed. There are no second chances.

As the lead barges approach the shore, the current reflecting perpendicular off the bank nudges the tow away and through the turn. Once this begins, it is critical to apply power to prevent the current from pushing the head of the tow across the midriver channel buoys and into the shallow sand bars that lurk there.

If this happens, the tow will pivot on the grounded lead barges and the tug will end up

downriver from the tow, a maneuver called topping around. This predicament may be complicated by breakaway barges riding the current.

If the pilot tries to steer the turn, his stern may pass dangerously close to the bank and the tug could bump or ground. The length of the larger tows and the narrow channel at the bends leave little room for error.

The combined length of the CARL CANNON and its tow is more than 1,000 feet.

On this crisp November morning, Jimmy Cain begins the final hour of his morning watch. The approach of the noon hour is announced by the aroma of barbecued ribs and beans.

Cain steers the tow expertly through the spans of the Interstate 57 bridge north of Cairo, Ill. He notices that the current seems swifter and begins backing down in anticipation of the upcoming right hand bend six miles from the mouth of the Ohio River.

As the tow's head approaches the bank, Cain continues to back down full and urges it to start coming right. It does, slowly.

A dike extends into the channel ahead of the tow. It will

be close.

Cain wills the barge to clear the rock-studded barrier as tension builds in his back and shoulders. "Come on baby, come on," he said.

The pilot freezes as the port-side lead barge slides into the air over the corner of the dike. The port-side string of four barges parts from the tow, the wire hawsers snapping like bailing twine.

"Damn," he said, as he punches the emergency button to alert the crew. The deckhands scurry onto the tow as the river decides the fate of the stray barges.

Continuing to back full, he watches helplessly as the lead breakaway barge pivots on the dike and two box barges follow it, locked into an eddy downriver behind the dike. The aft barge remains near the tow and the crew is able to snare it as Cain maneuvers toward the nearest bank.

He watches cautiously to ensure that the strays don't drift down on him or other tows and calls for help. Fortunately, assistance is only a few miles away.

Two American Commercial Barge Line tugs are dispatched from Cairo to assist. They are on scene in a little more than an hour and a third arrives later.

Seven hours later, it looks a whole lot better in front of Jimmy Cain than it looked behind him. Two of the barges are damaged but none sank.

The ACBL tugs and salvage crew have recovered the breakaway barges and have them patched, dewatered and remade into the tow ready to continue downriver. The company's quick and expert response is as impressive as the forces that caused the accident.

On paper, the incident might appear to be caused by pilot error. In the real world of swift, unforgiving current and split-second decision-making, it is difficult to determine what mistake, if any, was made.

The river is a law unto itself and each winding bend is a gut-check for the operator.

Joe Bass said, "Sometimes something good happens on a boat and sometimes something bad."

Making Smart Choices While Protecting Your Money

by LT. Michael Suire

Consumers are confronted with a vast array of products and services. Because the marketplace offers such variety, we need more information than ever to make wise buying decisions.

This article gives some tips that help you be a smarter consumer. It also discusses important laws enforced by the Federal Trade Commission and describes some of the latest scams and how you can avoid them.

You can get more information about these and other topics from the consumer information library available in the Second District Legal Office.

Buying A Used Car.

Buying a used car is a significant financial decision. If you've decided to purchase from a dealer, be sure to look for the "Buyers Guide," a sticker the dealer must put on the window of every used car offered for sale.

It explains any warranty coverage, the terms of an "As Is" sale, and suggests that you have the car inspected by a mechanic before you buy. The sticker also includes other information which becomes part of the sales contract.

If the dealer is offering a warranty, he must tell you how long the warranty lasts, what it covers, and what you must do to get service. In evaluating the warranty coverage you also need to be aware of the difference between a "warranty" and a "service contract."

A warranty is included in the sales contract and doesn't cost extra. A service contract, though often called an "extended warranty", costs extra and represents a separate buying decision.

You should NEVER pay for a warranty, but a service contract may be a worthwhile investment

depending on the repair record of your vehicle. If you buy a car "as is", you must pay for all repairs, even if the car breaks down on the way home from the dealership.

The best way to protect yourself is to check with your local or state consumer protection office. Some states prohibit "as is" sales on most or all used cars.

In these states, used cars may come with implied warranties. These warranties may give you some rights to have the dealer take care of serious problems that were not apparent at the time of purchase.

For more information on this topic, contact the District Legal Office for a copy of the brochures, *Buying A Used Car*, *Auto Service Contracts and Warranties*.

Credit Repair Companies.

If you are having difficulty getting credit, you may be tempted to contact a so-called "credit repair company" for help. Such companies promise that, for a fee, they can "fix" your poor credit history.

RUN, DO NOT WALK from such offers. If the negative information in your credit report is accurate, only time can erase the stigma.

Credit bureaus can report negative information for seven years, bankruptcies for ten.

If there are mistakes, errors or outdated information in your credit report, you can fix them yourself using the Fair Credit Reporting Act and working with the credit bureau, without paying a credit repair company.

Your first step is to ask the local credit bureau for the information in your credit report. Look under "credit bureaus" or "crediting reporting agencies" in the Yellow Pages for telephone numbers and addresses.

There may be a fee that ranges from \$5 to \$20, but if you've been denied credit within the last 30 days, the information must be provided free.

If you do note errors in the report, notify the credit bureau in writing, giving as much information as possible about what is wrong and why. When so notified, the credit bureau must, at no charge to you, re-investigate the disputed information.

It must then correct any mistakes or delete any information it can not verify.

For more information on this topic, contact the District Legal Office for a copy of the brochures, *Credit Repair Scams*, *Fix Your Own Credit Problems and Save Money*, *Solving Credit Problems and Building A Better Credit Record*.

"Gold" and "Platinum" Cards.

The pitch sounds like this: For a "nominal" initiation fee, usually \$50.00 or more, you, yes you, can get a "gold" or "platinum" credit card (after establishing a satisfactory purchase and payment record, a point not made in the offer) which will enable you to get other major credit cards and improve your overall credit rating.

Sounds too good to be true doesn't it? It is.

Many of the "metal card" marketers, who are targeting a lower-income population through direct mail, television and newspaper ads featuring "900" numbers—generally do not report to credit bureaus and their particular types of cards seldom help secure lines of credit with other creditors.

Further, while they sound like general-purpose credit cards not unlike a Visa or MasterCard, some "metal cards" permit you to buy merchandise only from the

issuer's catalog at prices higher than local, commercial retailers and only after you have paid an extra charge.

There is no quick and easy way to creditworthiness. Plans which promise to secure major credit cards or erase bad credit are at best a waste of money and at worst illegal.

Be skeptical. Contact the local consumer protection office or Better Business Bureau to find out if they have any information, negative or positive, about metal card marketers.

Be forewarned that unless a marketer subscribes to a credit bureau, they can not, and will not, report any information on your credit experience with them. For more information on this topic, contact the Second District Legal Office for a copy of the brochures, Choosing and Using Credit Cards and "Gold" and "Platinum" Cards.

The above are but a few of the potential problems you may encounter. There are many places where you can get consumer information, ask questions, or make complaints.

However, before sending a complaint about a company to a federal, state, or local consumer protection office, or the Better Business Bureau, always try to resolve the complaints with the company first. If your efforts prove unsuccessful, then don't be shy, complain!

Addresses for consumer protection agencies, national consumer organizations, local Better Business Bureaus, and trade associations as well as for many companies can be found in the Federal Trade Commission's Consumers Resource Handbook, which is available in the Second District Legal Office. You can get telephone numbers for many of these organizations in the local Yellow Pages.

Legal Assistance.

This article provided general information. Coast Guard Legal Assistance Officers are available to discuss specific questions about consumer protection problems or other personal issues.

The Second District's legal assistance program is explained in Commandant Instruction 5801.4 and Tab A to Appendix 4 to Annex E of the Second Districts SOP. The most popular services provided are wills and power of attorney.

If your problem is beyond the scope of the legal assistance program or the attorney's expertise, we will attempt to put you in contact with an attorney in your local area. If you have topics you want addressed in future articles, please let us know.

The telephone number for D2 legal is FTS 262-3727 or (314) 539-3727. Remember, if you don't ask, we can't help.

St. Louis-Area Captains Clean Up After Successful 1991 CFC Drive

by CDC John Koski

The 1991 Com-bined Federal Campaign is fin-ished, and Second District Coast Guard personnel in the St. Louis area went out in style! Greatly surpassing their ambitious goal of \$30,000, those as-signed to the District Staff (including administratively attached post-graduate students), MSO St. Louis, Base St. Louis, the cutters SUMAC, OBION and CHEYENNE, the Central Regional Recruiting Command, and Naval Engineering Support Unit St. Louis "dug deep" to arrive at their final contribution of \$34,598.

Everyone was en-couraged to contribute during the carwash.

their "fair share"—the equivalent of one hour's pay per month (that's their gross salary multiplied by 0.006). Of the 301 people who contributed (an overall 83 percent participation

rate), a phenomenal 77 did just that. Thanks to the many generous contributions, the "average" gift was just a few pennies shy of \$115!

As an incentive to encourage participation, an 0-6 Car Wash was conducted by the six captains (and two captain selectees) in the St. Louis area. Eight of the "fair share" contributors had



Second District chief of staff, CAPT James Walker, gives a dirty windshield his full attention during the carwash.



As part of an incentive to contribute their "fair share", 6 lucky winners had their vehicles scrubbed, compliments of the district office's captains corps. From the left; CAPT Garran Grow, CAPT Douglas Lundburg, CAPT James Lantry, CAPT Ronald Hindman, CAPT James Walker, CDR Lane McClelland, CDR David Anderson and CDR John Koski. (photo by PA3 Rob Raskiewicz)

their names drawn from a hat and ended up with spotless cars—a condition which was unfortunately short-lived due to the inelement weather that day.

Time Off For Newborns

by PA3 W. Scott Epperson and
PA3 Rob Raskiewicz

Two-career families are realizing that they cannot "have it all" and many parents are concerned that strangers are raising their children.

Because of rapid changes in society, service members with families need more flexibility and options than they have had in the past. The Coast Guard has recognized this need and responded with an innovative new policy.

Separation For Care Of Newborn Children (COMDTINST 1040.5) allows career members a *one time* separation from active duty for a period of up to 2 years to care for newborn children."

The instruction allows either parent to separate and defines newborn children as 12 months or younger. It guarantees reenlistment or new officer appointment after the two-year period.

The program was developed after a Coast Guard Headquarter's study of "Women in the Coast Guard." It is intended to help retain valuable, experienced personnel resources.

The study exposed the feeling that service members with families need time to care for their children, especially while they are young.

"The first two years are very critical, a lot of bonding takes place in the first twenty-four months," Yeoman Second Class Joseph Fyffe of the District "A" Division, said.

"It's about time they started looking at this problem," Yeoman First Class Donna Albert, of the Second District Reserve Division, said. She added that if you are having problems at home with babysitter, daycare, etc., you bring those problems with you to work.

Albert, mother of one (soon to be two), doesn't think she would use the policy, but said it is a good idea.

"I feel there is nothing more important for us as Coast Guard family than to take care of our family," said Master Chief Petty Officer Ronald E. Reed, Second District Command Enlisted Advisor.

"Children need care, children need love, children need to be taken care of," said Reed, father of five and grandfather of four.

"If we don't take care of our children, we're jeopardizing our country, and our future country," he said. "It's survival."



If you are considering taking advantage of this new program, there are a few stipulations to consider. You cannot have any active-duty-obligated service, must have completed at least one year at your current duty station and must have an approved physical on file.

Members adopting newborn children are also eligible for separation under this policy. In all cases, separation will begin within 12 months after the birth of the child.

Requests for separation must be submitted, through the appropriate chain of command, at least six months prior to the requested date of separation and state the intended date of return to active duty.

According to Master Chief Reed, the Coast Guard is a pioneer in initiating this type of program. "The other services are following it and will follow it," he said.

D2 Reserve Unit Receives Recognition

Reserve Unit Peoria and its Operation's Desert Shield and Desert Storm veterans were recognized recently by the Illinois Division of the Reserve Officer's Association. Captain Adolf Fullgrabe presented a plaque to Lieutenant Commander Mellisande Woerner, Commanding Officer of Reserve Unit Peoria.

From left to right, the members include: PS3 Dave Hamilton, PS3 Steve Jacobson, PS1 Scott Pettis, PSC Roger Dornas, EM2 Anthony Trunk and CW02 Frank Schaefer. Members not present are MK1 Greg Field and MK3 Robert Thurman.



Navy League Honors Coast Guard At Their Annual Ball

Story and photos by
PA3 Raskiewicz

The St. Louis Council of the Navy League honored the Coast Guard during its Annual Military Ball that was held Oct. 12.

The guest of honor for this gala event was Admiral J. W. Kime, Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard, who was accompanied by his lovely wife Valerie.

Art Flemming, the original host of the TV game show Jeopardy and long time supporter of the Navy League, was the evening's master of ceremonies.

Young and old alike enjoyed the elegant evening of fine dining and dancing to the big band sound at the Missouri Athletic Club.



What ball would be complete without a big band. Sentimental Journey played late into the evening to the delight of all who attended.



Admiral Kime and his wife Val were the center of attention for most of the people in uniform. Second District chief of staff, CAPT James Walker, along with RADM Norman Saunders, commander Second District, were on hand to greet the Commandant.



Art Flemming presides over the evening's festivities.



YN3
Raymond
Dalton and
his wife
Heather, chat
with RADM
Saunders
aide LTJG
Eric
Bernholtz
and his
wife Angela
during social
hour.



LCDR Ronald Branch, Desert Storm veteran from MSO St. Louis and the boy's dad watch in amazement as he takes aim on a passing bus with one of the Raider boat's machine guns during the V.P. Fair in St. Louis. (photos by PA3 Rob Raskiewicz)



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